

21 September, 1981

Dear Dick:

Here is the package on the A-12/SR-71 we discussed last night on the phone. Unfortunately, we did not have sufficient copies of the photos which Kelly included with his letter of 3 August, or I would have sent those to you as well.

Figure 21 was a picture of the A-12 mated to the TAGBOARD drone, referred to as the "D-21 configuration." Kelly's caption had described it as a "target drone," which raised the question about what CIA might have been doing in that line of business. Kelly seemed to feel that because someone in the German Air Force had taken a picture of the D-21 mated to a B-52 at David-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, and had printed it in "Der Spiegel," that it was somehow in the public domain.

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I am at a bit of a loss to know exactly what all this rush to declassify things is all about. I do know that Admiral Inman as DDCI is said to favor declassifying as much of the U-2 program as can be done, but it appears that he is also interested in satisfying Senator Goldwater in that regard. People seem to forget, if they ever knew, that both the U-2 and the A-12 were covert operations, and while the former suffered as a result of a "declassification event" (in the fine lingua of the security manuals) it nevertheless never came out in the open. In fact, the Agency continued to operate the U-2 covertly until well into 1974. Even today, the Air Force says next to nothing about the remaining nine U-2Rs they operate at Beale AFB in harness with the SR-71s. The A-12s themselves sit forlornly at Palmdale, victims of the NIH Syndrome as far as USAF is concerned, even though SECDEF, as late as 1971 admitted that it was a superior aircraft to the SR-71 in terms of performance and ECM systems.

I shall be at USNA on Friday to hear Kelly's speech and to meet his newest bride, Nancy, and JP and I will be lunching Thursday with Kelly over a jug of White Horse, which you may remember as the oil which lubricated many of our problems! I think that while the speech itself may escape notice in the press, once his article is published in HORIZONS, Aviation Week and others will jump on the "CIA Connection." Publication looks like November now. Please pardon my typos. One of the advantages (?) of being reincarnated as a researcher is that I am lacking a secretary. I will let you know if anything interesting develops.

Warmest best regards,

Sincerely, 